

Harold Eston Fowler (Sr.)

844424 Canadian Expeditionary Force.

1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade.



Prolog

My Grandfather passed away just 3 days after my 14th birthday in 1960. He was , all though life a soft spoken man who never raised his voice , the opposite of a fierce warrior that he once had to be. My father brought me , my brother Ian and my cousin Glen to his hospital bed , he wanted to look at us for one last time . I believe he was at peace with what he had to do in the First World War to keep the world a free place. I do remember my Grandmother once saying he sometimes felt bad for having to kill so many men in the war , his Grandmother Sarah Fowler, nee Eberle was half German and I think that bothered him to some extent .

I have always had a great interest in my grandfathers World War 1 experiences. He never spoke of them as did most Canadian WW1 vets , mainly due to them being mostly horrible memories.

My only recollection was as a child of maybe 7 or 8 years old sitting in front of his black and white TV on Ross Ave. in Sarnia , a WW2 movie or newsreel came on and I , using my finger as a gun went bang bang ... I want to kill those Germans , he calmly said to meNo Les you

don't want to ever have to do that , War is a horrible thing.

A couple of years after his death I recall my grandmother saying the two of them were once walking near their home on Ross Ave. when they saw a man slapping his wife or girlfriend . Harold told him to stop to which the man replied "What are you going to do about it old man". Harold's reply was "I fought German Soldiers face to face , I'm not afraid of you". The man turned and quickly walked away.

Many years after his death (early 1969) I was working as a temporary employee at the Imperial Oil Refinery in Sarnia where Harold worked for most of his life , an elderly employee asked me my name , upon hearing " Fowler" he asked if I was related to Harold Fowler , to which I said yes , he was my grandfather. The man shook my hand and said he was a well respected man by everyone who knew him.

I have here compiled as much information as I can of Harold's service in the First World War , using his Service Record and the various Unit War Diaries stored within the Government Archives in Ottawa , the document

“ History of the Canadian Machine Gun Corps” which was compiled in 1919 , several books written about the Battle of Amiens and the Last 100 Days of WW1 , plus valuable information supplied by my friend Dwight Mercer of Regina whose grandfather was a 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gunner in “C” Battery (The Borden’s).

Les Fowler Grandson 2016

Chapter 1

In Canada

Being born on October 2nd 1898 and growing up in the idyllic small Ontario town of Watford in Lambton County , Harold had no idea of what his late teen years would bring to him. With the outbreak of World War 1 in 1914 many of Canada's youth were eager to join the fight for King and Country. The legal age of 18 was required to join the Military , but as can be seen on his attestation papers his year of birth was scribbled over to make him seem one year older than he really was. At the age of 17 years 5 months, the recruiting personnel knew he would be over 18 by the time he made it overseas so they fudged his document and gladly signed him up.

ATTESTATION PAPER.

Duplicate
No. 844424

Folio.

CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

QUESTIONS TO BE PUT BEFORE ATTESTATION.

(ANSWERS.)

1. What is your surname? *Fowler*
- 1a. What are your Christian names? *Harold Eston*
- 1b. What is your present address? *Weyford Ontario, Canada.*
2. In what Town, Township or Parish, and in what Country were you born? *Weyford Ontario, Canada.*
3. What is the name of your next-of-kin? *Jack F Fowler*
4. What is the address of your next-of-kin? *Weyford Ontario, Canada.*
- 4a. What is the relationship of your next-of-kin? *Father*
5. What is the date of your birth? *Oct 2nd 1898*
6. What is your Trade or Calling? *Telegraph Operator*
7. Are you married? *no*
- Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated and inoculated? *yes*
9. Do you now belong to the Active Militia? *no*
10. Have you ever served in any Military Force? *no*
If so, state particulars of former Service.
11. Do you understand the nature and terms of your engagement? *yes*
12. Are you willing to be attested to serve in the } *yes*
CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE? }

DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, *Harold Eston Fowler*, do solemnly declare that the above are answers made by me to the above questions and that they are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements by me now made, and I hereby engage and agree to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, and to be attached to any arm of the service therein, for the term of one year, or during the war now existing between Great Britain and Germany should that war last longer than one year, and for six months after the termination of that war provided His Majesty should so long require my services, or until legally discharged.

Date *Feb 28th* 191*6* *Harold Eston Fowler* (Signature of Recruit)
R.P. Brown (Signature of Witness)

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, *H.E. Fowler*, do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of all the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

Date *28th Feb 1916* *Harold Eston Fowler* (Signature of Recruit)
R.P. Brown (Signature of Witness)

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE.

The Recruit above-named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.

The above questions were then read to the Recruit in my presence.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said Recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me, at *Weyford Ontario, 28th* day of *Feb* 191*6*

Canada. *R.P. Brown* (Signature of Justice)

Recruiting poster from the Petrolia Advisor Newspaper.

MEN! MEN! MEN!
Report at Once at the Recruiting Office
You are needed to uphold the dearest things in the world
TRUTH HONOR LIBERTY
The life worth living is to be found in the ranks defending the
weak and oppressed
Enlist Now, in Lambtons 149 Batt., C. E. F.
The Banner Battalion of Canada
SCALE OF PAY

Rank	Pay Per Day.	Field Allowance Per Day.	Separation Allowance Per Month.
Sergeants	\$1.35	15c	\$25.00
Corporals	1.10	10	20.00
Privates, buglers, drummers, etc	1.00	10	20.00

Men are fed and clothed by the Government.

The Patriotic Fund has been created to assist those dependents of a soldier who need more help than the Government gives.

Many employers have pledged themselves to give preference to returned soldiers when engaging men.

PENSIONS—In case of death \$22.00 a month is paid to the widow, and \$5.00 a month for each child. A widowed mother whose son was her sole support receives \$22.00 a month. Pensions are also paid for partial and permanent disablement.

CONDITIONS OF ENLISTMENT—Age, 18 years to 45 years. Height, 5 feet 2 inches minimum.

HOW TO ENLIST—Apply at recruiting office, Main St. Opposite Tecumseh House, Petrolia, or any of the following recruiting stations. Watford, Sarnia, Forest, Alvinston, Brigden, Arkona, Thedford, Oil Springs.

149th Battalion---Lambton's
Lt. Col. T. P Bradley, O. C. 149th Batt.

Petrolia Advertiser
26 January 1916

The 149th Battalion C.E.F. began forming on November 26th 1915 with it's headquarters in Watford Ontario.



The Battalion was taking men from all of Lambton County. Harold signed up , on Feb. 28th 1916. A month later on May 28th 1916 a Battalion parade was held in Sarnia which included wrestling and boxing matches.

Grand Mobilization LAMBTONS 149 Sarnia, May 28th to 29th

Programme of Events

SATURDAY

- 9 a.m. Grande Military Parade around City.
- 2 p.m. Battalion will fall in on Market Square, march to Old Golf Links, Exmouth street, for Field Day of Military Sports.
- 3 p.m. Bayonet Fighting and Physical Training Exhibition.
- 3.30 p.m. Baseball Game; Football Game and other athletics start; at Golf Links.
- 8 p.m. Athletic Exhibition in City Hall;
 - 2 Wrestling Bouts
 - 2 Boxing Bouts
 - etc.
- Music in Attendance

SUNDAY

- 9.30 a.m. Church Parade of whole battalion on Victoria Square.

MONDAY

Entrain for London

GOODBYE TO LAMBTON
GOD SAVE THE KING

Programme for the Mobilization of the 149th Battalion
as it appeared in the May 26, 1916 issue of the Sarnia Canadian.

Among Harold's souvenirs is a small boxing medal that we can only assume he acquired on that day although he may have boxed within later Units such as the 161st and 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade on sports days.



Two days later the Battalion would go by train to Carling Heights near London Ontario to begin training. Here they board the train near Front St. in downtown Sarnia Ont.



Early photos (1916) have Harold holding a bugle and being associated with the Battalion's Band. We can only guess why , possibly because he was listed as a Telegraph Operator in civilian life , buglers would be used as signallers in battle.

Here the 149th Battalion poses in London Ont. , Harold is standing with bugle in hand in back of the band on the left in this 1916 undated photo taken at Queens Park (Western Fair Grounds).



This photo is the full 149th Battalion Band including the bugling section taken 1916 at Queens Park London Ont. Harold with his Bugle is in back row 4th from the right.



WW1 Bugle.



Inset from the above photo.



Here Harold is standing in the back row on the left with some members of the band along with some appreciative ladies. Taken probably in 1916 Queens Park London Ont.

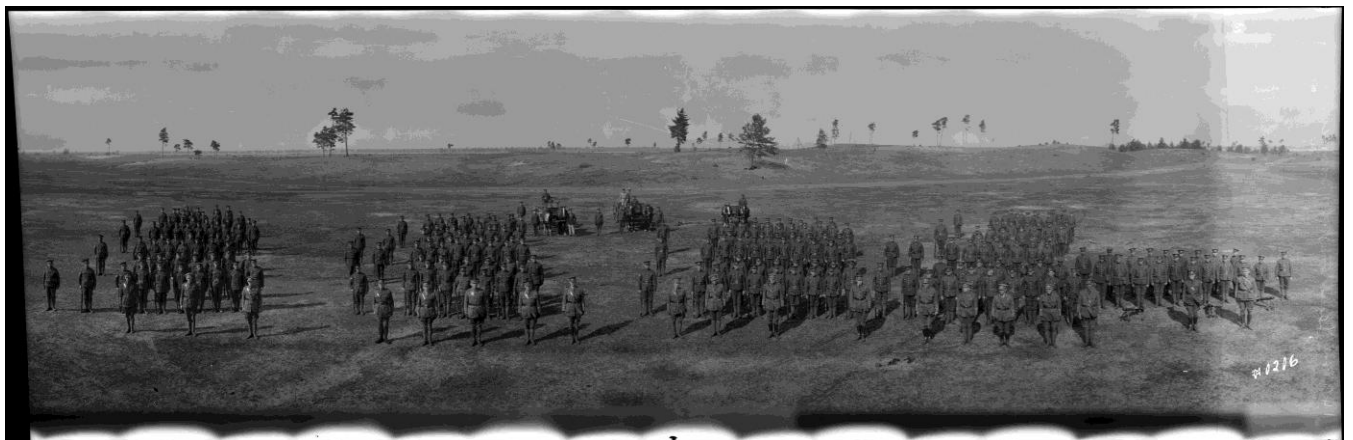
Ladies always love men in uniform.



On the 8th of July 1916 they moved to Camp Borden (named after the Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden) which is near Lake Simcoe north of Toronto to begin training in earnest. The Camp was mostly bush at first so the men were required to clear it themselves to set up the Camp. It soon would become a vast tent city housing over 32,000 troops.



The Battalion would pose for photos several times at Camp Borden.



At this point Harold gave up his bugle and was put into the Machine Gun Section of the 149th , and he would remain a Machine Gunner for the duration of the war. The reasons for his move to the Machine Gun Section although unknown was probably were due to him being an above average shot and very mechanically inclined.



Harold is the 4th man from the right in this Battalion photo now in the Machine Gun Section , with their 3 Lewis Machine Guns.

The Lewis Machine Gun was almost like a large rifle with an air cooled barrel and a 50 round magazine on top , it could be fired from the hip or on the ground.



In the early years of the war machine guns were only considered to be defensive weapons , but that would change , the Canadians would change the British minds on their usefulness as offensive weapons . The British War Records would later read as if it was their tactical change in the machine guns use , not wanting the Canadians to be seen as smarter than them. The Commander of the Canadian Machine Gun Corps General Raymond Brutinel was the brilliant mind behind future tactics of machine gun use. He devised the use of the Machine Gun as a weapon similar to the Artillery Cannon , keeping the enemy huddled down in their trenches and

dugouts so the Canadian Infantry could advance on them across “No Man’s Land” without being mowed down .

Training at Camp Borden was intense in the ensuing months ahead , but the men would get the odd day off to have some fun with glasses of beer , gas masks , smokes and wooden guns .

Harold is in the front row on the right with a very short haircut.

Taken probably in 1916.



Bayonet training , date unknown.

Harold is in second row , second from right.



Summer time would be very hot and humid at Camp Borden in southern Ontario , so straw hats were issued to all the men for the summer months. Harold is 2nd from the left , a fine looking crew posing outside of their tent.



In stark contrast to summer , winter 1916/1917 living in tents at Camp Borden would be a challenge to keep warm so camp fires would help to some extent , maybe even make a cup of hot tea on a cold winters night.



In late November of 1916 Harold would receive the sad news that his cousin Clarence James Williams was killed during the Battle of the Somme attacking Desire Trench.



149th Battalion Christmas Card.



With training completed in March of 1917 they moved temporarily back to Queen's Park in London Ont. The men had to sleep under the grandstand while there , but they were tough men now , no longer boys. Harold was given a pass to visit family at home in Watford from the 16th to the 19th of March 1917 as the Battalion was scheduled to go by train to Halifax to board the SS Lapland for the voyage to England on the 25th of March.

(To be handed to the Man proceeding on Pass.)

PASS.

Place London
Date MAR 16 1917

Royal B' COMPANY, 149th BN, C.E.F.

No. 844424 Gte Fowler

has permission to be absent from his Quarters from 5
o'clock pm the MAR 16 1917 until 12
o'clock noon the MAR 19 1917 for the
purpose of going Watford

W.S. MAR 16 1917 149th Bn. C.E.F.

Lt.-Col. Commanding.

W. J. Macvicar

Mil. Book 63.
25m.—10-16.
H. Q. 1772-61-32.

This photo was probably taken at Harold's father Jacob Eston Fowler's home in Watford Ont. Left to right is Joe Alldred #844027 with Annie Ferns, Harold with her sister Rosetta Ferns. After the war the sisters would marry their respective soldiers.



Here again at Jacob Fowler's in Watford seated left to right is Harold , Rosetta Ferns , and Joe Alldred. Annie Ferns is standing behind Joe , the other 3 are unknown.



Harold and Joe Alldred with unknown lady in Watford .
Joe Alldred would , in the war be transferred from the
149th Battalion to the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles and
survive the war.



Harold would send \$20 per month home to his mother.

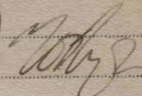
1		2	
Particulars of Family, etc:		Army Book 84.	
1. State whether married, widower or single:		Reg. No. 844424	
Single		Name FOWLER, H.E.	
2. If married, give full name and postal address of wife, or if widower, name and address of guardian of children, or if single, name and address of next-of-kin, stating relationship to the soldier:		CANADIAN PAY BOOK	
Father.		FOR USE ON	
Mr. Jacob Fowler,		ACTIVE SERVICE.	
Wattford			
Ontario			
3. If married after enlistment, state date of marriage:		Original unit in which enlisted:	
		149th Battalion	
4. Assignment of pay: Date effective:		Regimental Depot: SEAFORD.	
Twenty \$		Reserve unit:	
\$		Unit in field:	
\$		1st CANADIAN MOTOR MACHINE GUN BRIGADE.	
5. Name and address of assignee:		Regimental Number: 844424	
Mother.		Rank (1) Pte. Rank (5)	
Mrs. Ida Fowler.		(2) (6)	
Same address as No. 2.		(3) (7)	
6. Any change of assignee:		(4) (8)	
		Name in full (surname first):	
		FOWLER, Harold, Eaton,	
		Civilian occupation:	
		Telegraph Operator.	
		Attestation date:	
		28th February 1916.	
		Religion:	
		Methodist	

Regt. No. 844424. *H.E.*
Name PLD. FOWLER.
In block letters (Surname first)

PAY BOOK

CANADIAN
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

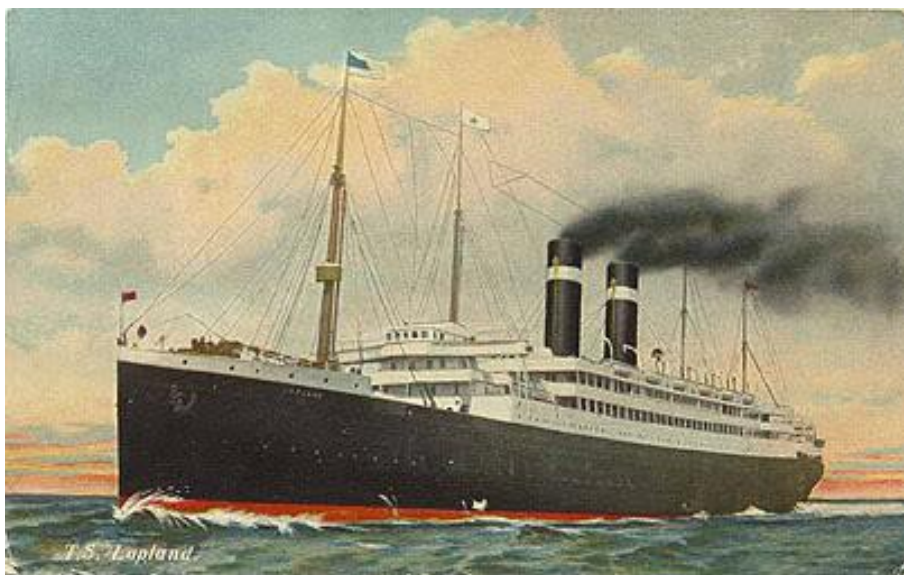
M.P.W. 244.
1941. 10-18.
1772-1-29.

Signature of Soldier		Regt. No.		Name				
H. E. Fowler		844424		Pte FOWLER H E				
				In block letters (surname first)				
Date	Particulars	Credits	Cash Payments and other charges	Assigned Pay	Deferred Pay	BALANCE		Signature of Paymaster or officer making award
						Debit	Credit	
	Book opened this date		13 30					
	27-4-19							
	Pay & Allowance to		29 70					
	Civilian Clothing Allowance		35 00					
	1st. Payment W. S. G.		70 00					
	Assigned Pay			20 00				
	Boat Expense Money							
	Train Expense Money		4 87					
	Cheque No. 53209		5 00					
			91 53					
Totals Carried Forward								

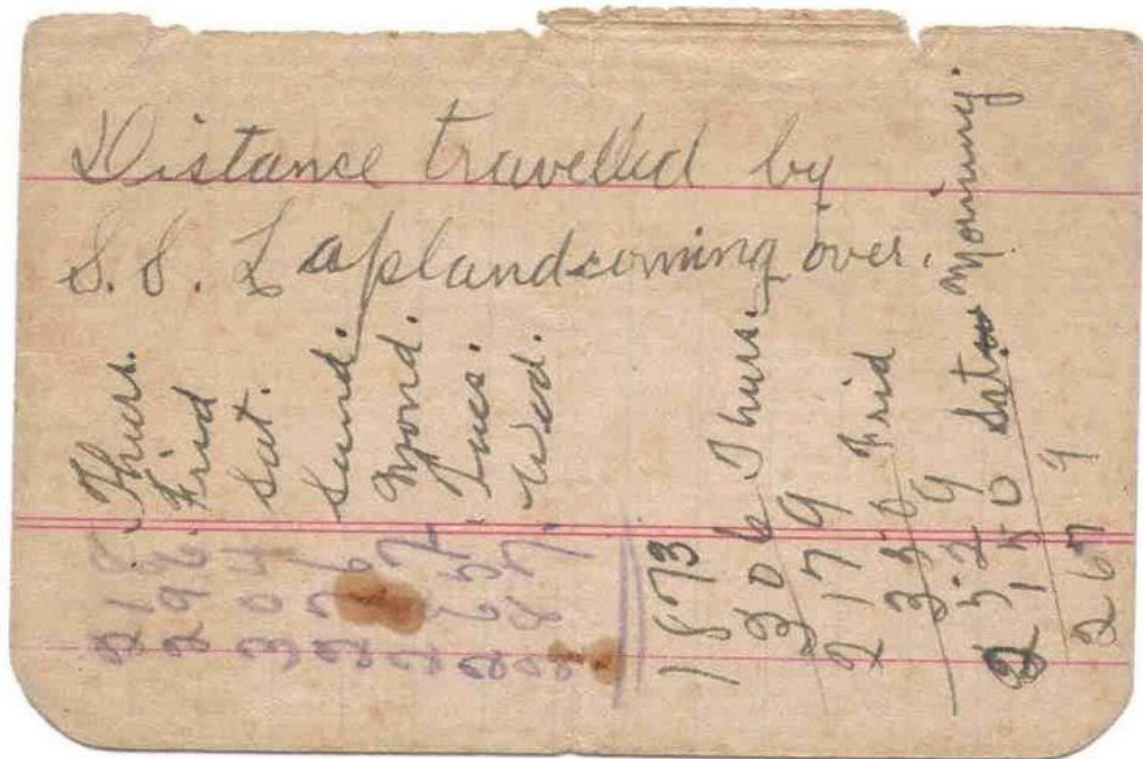
Chapter 2

In England

From Halifax on March 25th 1917 the SS Lapland would take them across the Atlantic Ocean to England.



On the voyage across the Atlantic Harold kept track of the distance traveled each day on a small piece of paper.



They would arrive April 7th 1917 , 2 days before the Battle of Vimy Ridge . The boredom of an uneventful crossing of the Atlantic would change abruptly upon entering the Mersey River. About 12 miles from Liverpool the SS Lapland struck a mine but made it to the dock before sinking . Luckily no casualties were reported.

The 149th Battalion was quickly disbanded as men were desperately needed as replacements to the fighting

Battalions in France. Some 149th men would be immediately sent to France. Luckily Harold was transferred to the 25th Reserve Battalion at Bramshott , then on June 1st he and about 200 others were sent to the 161st Battalion (Huron County) who were at Witley Camp in Surrey.



Although it's unlikely he would know any men of the 161st Battalion at first , they were all from close by in the Godrich area so they would have lots in common. Charles Francis Bell #844067 of Sarnia was continually transferred to the same Units as Harold throughout the War. They would fight together in "C" Battery of the 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade. It must have been good for both to have another Lambton County man at your side throughout the war.

The 161st Battalion CEF was now part of the 5th Canadian Division. The Canadian Corps was comprised of 4 Divisions fighting in France while the just newly formed 5th Division was kept training in England . They were kept there as a large defensive Unit capable of defending England in case of a German invasion. All through the rest of 1917 the 161st Battalion practiced trench raids with other Battalions of the 5th Division such as the 125th , 150th and 156th as well as the 18th Machine Gun Company. (Unknown at the time the 18th Machine Gun Company would in June 1918 become "E" Battery of the 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade who would fight side by side with "C" Battery (the Borden Battery) .

The 5th Canadian Division had an ever changing system of trenches dug into the English countryside that simulated the Western Front trench system.

Training would consist of the various Battalions taking turns as the attacking Canadians or the attacking enemy. The war diaries for the 161st Battalion list them as being called at times the German 99th Bavarian Regiment when they were to play the defending or attacking enemy troops .

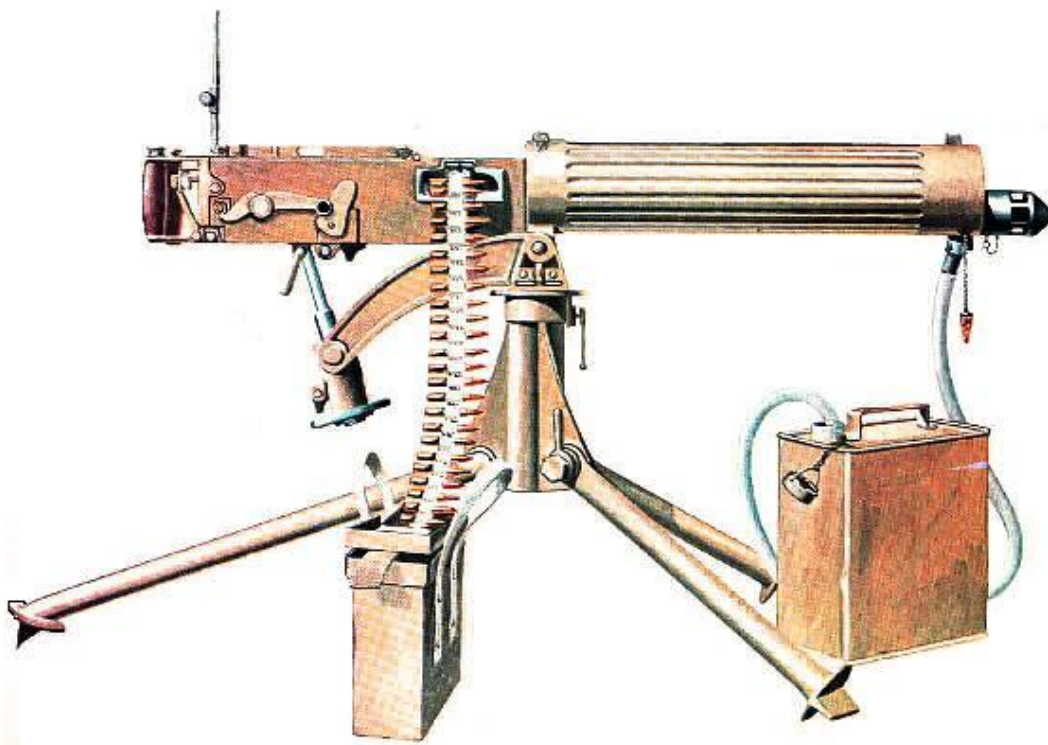
During a short break on July 27th His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen arrived to inspect the troops. The King expressed his satisfaction at the keenness and appearance of the troops of the 5th Canadian Division .

The rest of the year would be more of the same intense training , practising trench warfare against each other , such as Mills Bomb throwing (hand grenades) Bayoneting and Lewis Machine Gun use.

Harold at this time would become trained in the use of the British Vickers Machine Gun. It would become his “Tool of the Trade” for the fighting ahead. The men on a Vickers Machine Gun Crew would be required not just to

be able to operate it , but be able to un-jam or repair broken parts of the gun under fire in the dark , as their lives would depend on it.

Harold was trained as the # 2 man on his machine gun crew. His job was to feed the 250 round belts into the gun so the # 1 man firing only needed to concentrate on shooting. If the # 1 man was shot or fatigued he would take over as the # 1. The # 3, 4, and 5 men would supply fresh ammo belts and do scouting duties.



The Vickers Machine Gun could fire at a rate of over 500 rounds per minute so a 250 round belt could be emptied in 30 seconds , the belt was 27 feet long , hence the expression still used today “give em’ the whole 9 yards” .

The can in front is to supply water to the barrel jacket to cool the barrel which would get very hot and melt without it. Barrels would wear out soon enough and need to be changed after a set number of rounds (15,000) or they would become inaccurate. In winter the Canadian gunners would run a long hose away from the gun so the enemy seeing the steam from the hot water would think they were in a different location , fire on the steam and disclose their own location to deadly results.

They would also be trained on captured German Machine Guns so they could turn them around in battle and use them against the fleeing German Troops that left them behind. The 161st Battalion Machine Gun Section would be a highly efficient well trained and close knit Unit by the early months of 1918.

In England with the 161st Battalion.



In England with the 161st Battalion.



Chapter 3

France , Belgium , Germany.

Early in 1918 the 5th Canadian Division was ordered to disband and the men used as replacements in France which were badly needed due to the high casualty rate so now Harold and most of the 161st Machine Gunners were sent to the 4th Reserve Battalion on Feb.23rd , then on March 16th orders came to go to France to join the 47th Battalion. He arrived on March 18th 1918 at “Columbia Camp” in the Souchez area of France. The 47th Battalion was originally from New Westminster B.C. but re-designated as a Southern Ontario Battalion in early 1918 due to the fact replacements coming in from B.C. could not keep pace with the casualty rate. The 47th Battalion had taken on many 149th men much earlier so Harold would briefly meet up with some old friends , at least those who were still alive. One can only imagine how he felt after enlisting under age at 17 and spending 2 years of training before being sent to the actual war.



His short stay with the 47th Battalion was uneventful , lasting just a few weeks , new orders came for him and the others to be sent to the Canadian Machine Gun Corps Reinforcement Pool. From there, on June 16th he was posted to “C” Battery (Borden Battery) of the newly reorganized 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade and would stay in this Unit for the duration of the war. The “Borden’s” as they called themselves were already a battle hardened Unit from previous fighting and would

continue to distinguish itself until the Armistice. Other countries would eventually form Armoured Mobil Units in the war but the Canadian Machine Gunners were the first ever to use them in the history of warfare.

Cap and Collar Badge for the 1st CMMGB show the American Colt Machine Gun which was replaced with the British Vickers Machine Gun later in France.

Harold wore these Collar Badges.



The Machine Gun Corps Cap Badge he wore.



The 1st Motors tunics, helmets and vehicles used a brown arrow over a red bar to signify who they were.



Every Soldier was required to wear an Identification Disc or “Dog Tag” to identify them if they became a casualty .

The front reads – 844424 P H FOWLER CAN

The back reads – 1 ST MMGB



The men chosen to be transferred to the Motor Machine Gun Brigades were not randomly picked out of the many men available. General Brutinel (who was the father of the Canadian Machine Gun Corps) told his staff to find the best men they could , intelligent , well trained and highly disciplined. Capt. Mark Levey who was in charge of the Canadian Machine Gun Corps School only took the

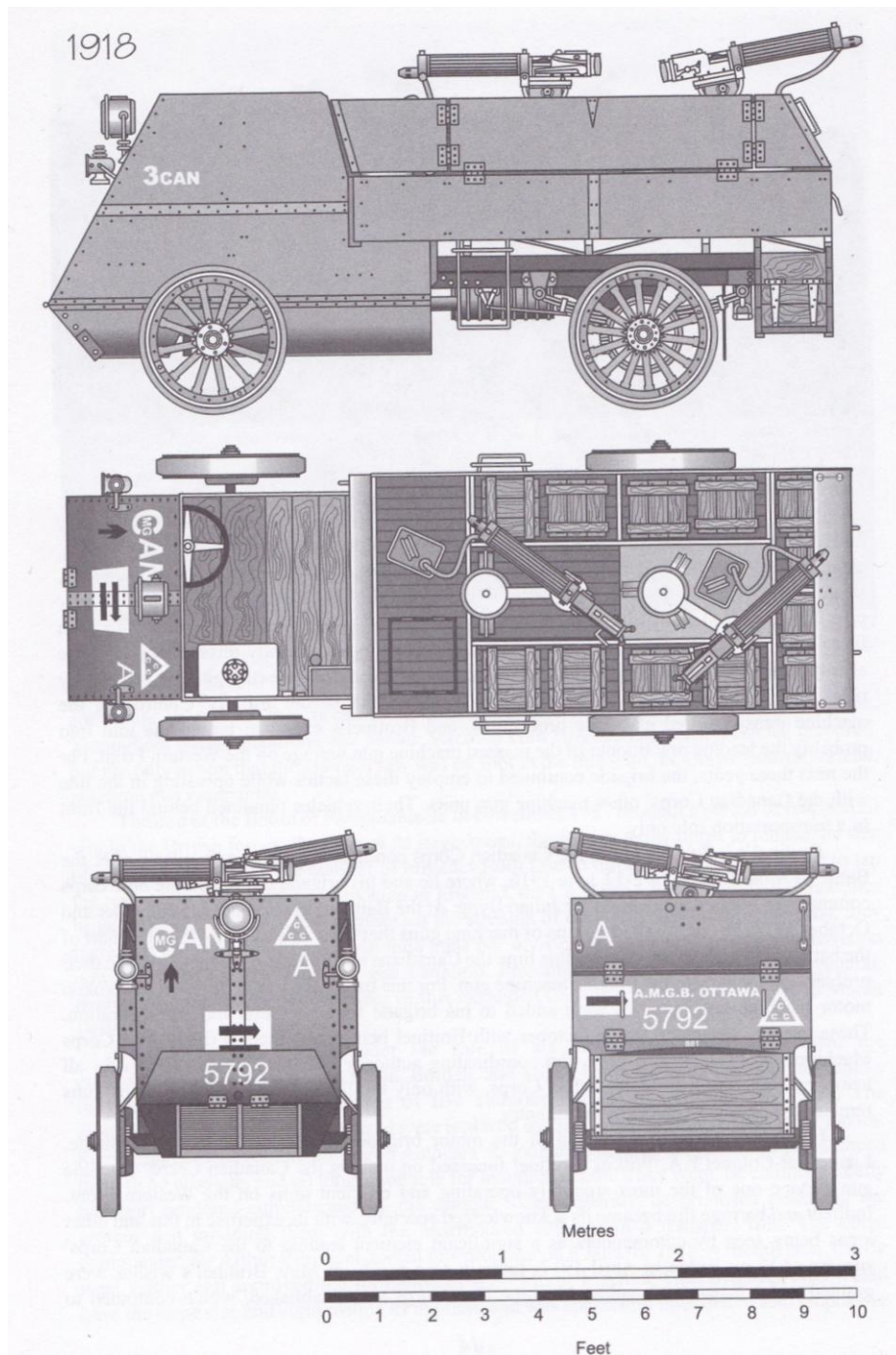
“cream of the crop”. General Brutinel expected his men to be the best men available and he was not let down.

They wanted men who would not just blindly follow orders under fire but be capable of independent thought and action to achieve positive results under the worst conditions.

The Brigade totalling 40 Machine Guns , was comprised of 5 Batteries. Each Battery with 8 guns was comprised of about 55 men. The Brigade would only total about 300 men , small when compared to an Infantry Battalion that totalled about 1000 men. Although small in size the 1st CMMGB would be a major factor in the intense and bitter fighting of the last 100 days of the war.

The “1st Motors” used Armoured Cars (light trucks) from the Autocar Company of Ardmore Pennsylvania and British Napier Lorrie Trucks . “C” or “Borden Battery” would give up the Autocars at this time and use the British Napier Lorries with mounts for two Vickers Machine Guns in each.

Canadian Armoured Autocar.



For the next couple of weeks the training would now change , concentrating more upon mobile warfare tactics for the planed “Battle of Amiens” which was slated to commence on August 8th. Every man was trained to do every position within their gun crew. The Borden Battery having been in action since 1915 was now a mixture of seasoned battle hardened men such as Pvt. Richard Mercer #911016 from Theodore Saskatchewan and eager new members like Harold Fowler, Charles Bell and several other 161st Battalion Machine Gunners. This mixture would serve to help the new men in the many trying times ahead.

Orders came in on the evening of August 5th to move into position under the cover of darkness. They had no actual idea of where they were going and ended up hidden in a small woods. All vehicles were camouflaged , even their tire tracks were obliterated , no fires or cooking was allowed. The whereabouts of the whole Canadian Corps was kept secret as the Germans feared the Canadians the most and would double up on the number of troops facing them. As the attack was to be a surprise the Allied High Command even gave out false

reports of the Canadians being moved to the Vimy sector of the Western Front. From this point forward the two Motor Machine Gun Brigades along with a Trench Mortar Battalion , a Cyclist Battalion and some others would be known as the “Canadian Independent Force” or “Brutinel’s Brigade”. The composition of this force would change several times but the “Motors” would remain the driving force of “Brutinel’s Brigade”. This composite force was unique and never duplicated in the war by any other Army , but it should be noted their accomplishments were of great value and praised by many French and British Generals.

So August 8th 1918 would be the first real combat Harold would experience. This date , the beginning of the “Battle of Amiens” marked the start of “ The Last 100 Days “ of the war. The Canadian Corps played a most important part in the “Last 100 Days”. The Canadian Troops were considered to be an “Elite Corps” of Shock Troops due to their reputation of bravery and fierceness from the first gas attacks in 1915 , to the Battles of the Somme , Vimy Ridge , Passchendaele , and the German Offensive in the spring of 1918 in which the “Borden’s” helped save the

British 5th Army from defeat as the enemy came within 50 miles of Paris. The Canadians were to be used as the spearhead of the Allied Attack throughout the “Last 100 Days”.

The “Motors” were touted as being the “Elite of the Elite”. Infantry soldiers would often cheer them as they drove by knowing that they would be well protected during the days fight. Detailed diaries of the action in the ensuing days were sparse for the “1st Motors” as they were a fast ever moving mobile unit which saw a lot of battle action.

The roll of the Motor Machine Gunners this day was , as part of the “Canadian Independent Force” to move forward along the Amiens-Roye Road between the French Army and the Canadian Corps to protect the Canadian flank.

The French upon reaching the outskirts of the village of Mezieres halted due to German resistance in the town. This was not a desirable situation as a large gap between the stalled French Army and the rapidly advancing Canadians would develop causing a dangerous break in the Allied Line. General Brutinel along with the French

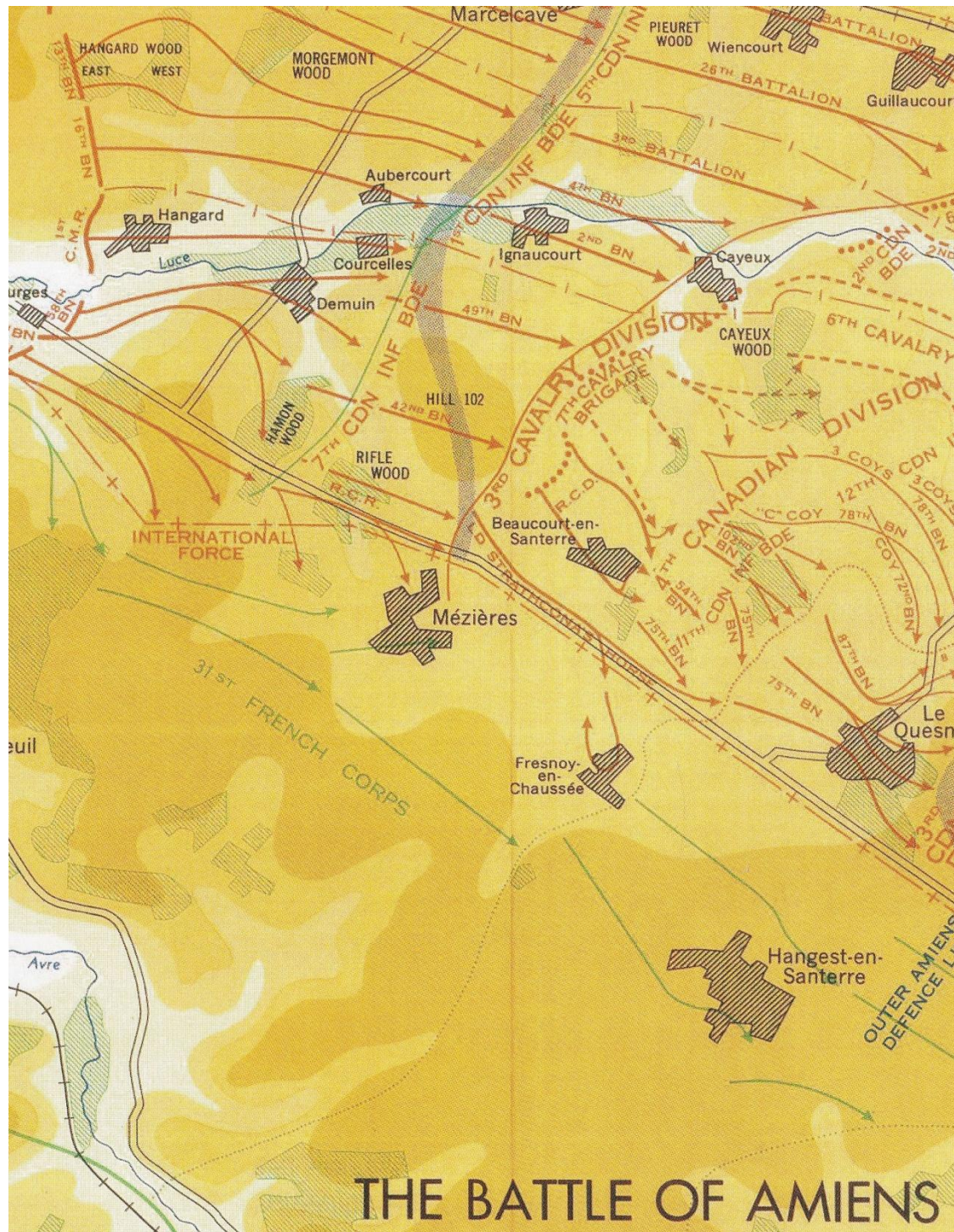
High Command realizing this danger started to plan a separate attack on Mezieres to rectify this problem when word came in that Captain W.T. Trench , who was in command of “C” Battery realized the danger and sped the Battery down a narrow road behind the village while under heavy enemy shelling and machine gun fire to take the enemy from the rear. This bold action allowed the attack to resume as planned. Later in the afternoon “C” Battery joined up with the rest of the Brigade to fire on the enemy around Le Quesnel and Fresnoy to assist the French in their attack on Fresnoy which the French failed to take this day. Quite a first day under fire for any man , but many more such days lay ahead for him and the Borden Battery.

The Canadians would advance 8 miles on August 8th , the most ground taken in one day by any Army during the entire war. The German Commander Erich Ludendorf would call August 8th 1918 as the “Black Day of the German Army” and it would spell the beginning of the end for them. That night “C” Battery took up a defensive position on the right side of the Amiens-Roye Road south of Beaucourt to cover Fresnoy which was strongly held

by the enemy .The Battle of Amiens would rage for 3 more days before grinding to a halt as the supporting units of Artillery and Supplies could not keep pace with the exhausted Infantry.

Although at times during a battle , the Brigade having met their objective would be sent back several miles in reserve (to rest and regroup) they were always on high alert to speed forward at a moments notice to support any need.

This map shows the Amiens – Roye Road running just north of Mezieres and the Independent Force swinging south to aid the stalled French Army.



Here the 1st Motors and Trench Mortar group rest along the Amiens-Roye Road during a lull in the battle. They were ordered to put white panels on the hoods of their vehicles to prevent being subjected to friendly fire from allied airplanes .



A lot of the “Motors” work was to protect the advancing Infantry by taking part in massed Machine Gun Barrages where as much as 320,000 rounds of .303 ammunition would be fired. They were skilled not just at “Direct Fire” but also at “Indirect Fire”. This action would be , not actually seeing their targets , but by firing at predetermined angles they knew at what distance their bullets would rain down upon the enemy protecting the Infantry as they advanced at a set rate over “No Man’s Land”.

August 26th at 3AM the Brigade fired in a successful combined Artillery and Machine Gun Barrage near Tilloy to support the 2nd Canadian Division’s attack towards the Drocourt-Queant Line which was part of the well fortified Hindenberg Line of German defences using 201,000 rounds of ammunition with a machine gun placed every 35 yards. The 2nd Canadian Division achieved their objective by 11AM so for the next few days the 1st Motor Batteries were withdrawn to Corps Reserve in Arras.

The next planned battle was to break through the Drocourt-Queant Line and capture the high ground overlooking the Canal-du-Nord. The battle commenced

at 5AM on September 2nd 1918. The fighting this day was intense , enemy artillery was heavy , plus enemy planes continually strafed them with machine gun fire and dropping small “Egg Bombs”. On this day the 1st Motors would suffer 5 men killed , 4 Officers and 30 men wounded along with 20 of their vehicles damaged , some totally destroyed. By evening the Germans had withdrawn to the east side of the Canal-du-Nord , blowing all the bridges behind them.

The Brigade would spend most of the next couple of weeks licking their wounds and getting their damaged vehicles repaired by the Canadian Motor Machine Gun Mechanical Transport Company who’s job was to keep the two Motor Brigades mobile. Training would combine tactics for the next battle as well as sports to keep moral high. Indoor baseball and football , inter-battery machine gun drills , revolver competitions and small box respirator drills were keenly contested.

As the Motor Machine Gunners worked in tight spaces , rifles for personal protection were not practical so they were all armed with 455 calibre pistols . In the Infantry Battalions only Officers were allowed pistols , the average Infantry Private would be jealous of the Motor Machine Gun Privates in this regard.



They weren't always machine gunning at a distance , sometimes they would have to rely on their pistols when in close contact with the enemy. The British used the Webley 455 , the Canadians used the American Colt 455.

On Sept.27th at 5:20AM just north of Inchy the 1st Motors fired 11,000 rounds in a barrage that totalled 320,000 rounds fired to support the attack and crossing of the Canal du Nord. The Canal du Nord was a major obstacle that General Sir Arthur Currie the Canadian Commander said his men could take in a bold but dangerous attack. They would attack on a small portion of the unfinished Canal that was dry at this time. The Canadian attack was a success , but it would cost the 1st Motors heavily , they would suffer 8 killed and 14 wounded this day. One of the men killed was Arthur Leopold Tiernay #654682 , an original 161st Battalion machine gunner from Blyth Ont. Harold and Arthur would have most likely been very good friends as they trained together in the 161st Battalion Machine Gun Section all through the second half of 1917 and early part of 1918 in England.

As the most mobile Unit on the Western Front they were often tasked with moving several hundred miles on short notice. If an Infantry Battalion was in trouble they were sped to that section of the Western Front to assist .

The only problem in mobility would be the artillery cratered roads that would impede their movement.

This is where the motorcycle scouts would be of great value in finding the best route. Another aspect of Harold's duties were as a motorcycle scout riding ahead of the Brigade's Armoured Cars to observe and report back the road conditions and to spot enemy placements , an extremely dangerous but necessary duty when the Motors forged ahead. They would be open to enemy fire from artillery and machine guns with only their 455 pistols to fight back , true men of steel .

Here the 1st Motors wait along the Arras-Cambrai Road just east of Arras , in Sept. 1918.



On Oct. 2nd "C" Battery was dug in and well camouflaged south of Sancourt between the Cambrai-Douai Road and the railway to protect the 2nd Canadian Division , it was Harold's 20th birthday spent crouched in a hole in the ground , no birthday cake this year. For several days they would be subjected to heavy enemy artillery of high explosive and gas shells. Luck seemed to be on Harold's side again and again , never being wounded in this Hell.

Gas Mask worn by the Canadian Troops.



Next would be an attack to capture the bridgeheads over the Canal de l' Escaut and capture the city of Cambrai. The night of Oct.8th/9th "C" Battery set up their guns just south on Sancourt and at 1:30AM fired for 2 continuous hours. By mid afternoon the 1st Motors would cross the Canal de l' Escaut at Point d' Airy. During the night enemy

shell fire destroyed two of the 1st Motors Lorries and damaged two more plus one of their Ford Cars.

Oct.12th to the 18th was spent refitting and repairing equipment , with His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales visiting them on the 18th. On Oct. 19th “C” Battery and one Armoured Car were attached to the 3rd Canadian Infantry Battalion at Ferin , to protect them , then on the 20th they were sent to the 4th Canadian Infantry Battalion to assist them in battle.

On the 22nd of Oct. “C” and “E” Batteries were ordered to go ahead of the Infantry to find the enemy , they entered the town of Raismes but were hampered by destroyed roads. Enemy contact was made with “E” Battery taking the lead and “C” Battery in support. Later the Infantry came forward along with “A” and “B” Batteries who relieved “C” and “E” Batteries from a hard day of combat. Oct.24th to the 28th were relatively quiet allowing the men a well earned rest and equipment refit.

Another massive combined Artillery and Machine Gun Barrage (72 machine guns) took place on November 1st to protect the 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade's advance on Valenciennes France. As Valenciennes was crowded with French citizens and refugees the plan was to not fire on the city , but to lay the barrage down approaching it allowing the Infantry to move in uncontested.

Leading this attack would be the 44th and 47th Battalions. So on this day Harold would actually be protecting some of the original 149th Battalion men now fighting as members of the 47th Battalion. It must have been very gratifying for him and Charles Bell to know they were doing this particular duty on this particular day.

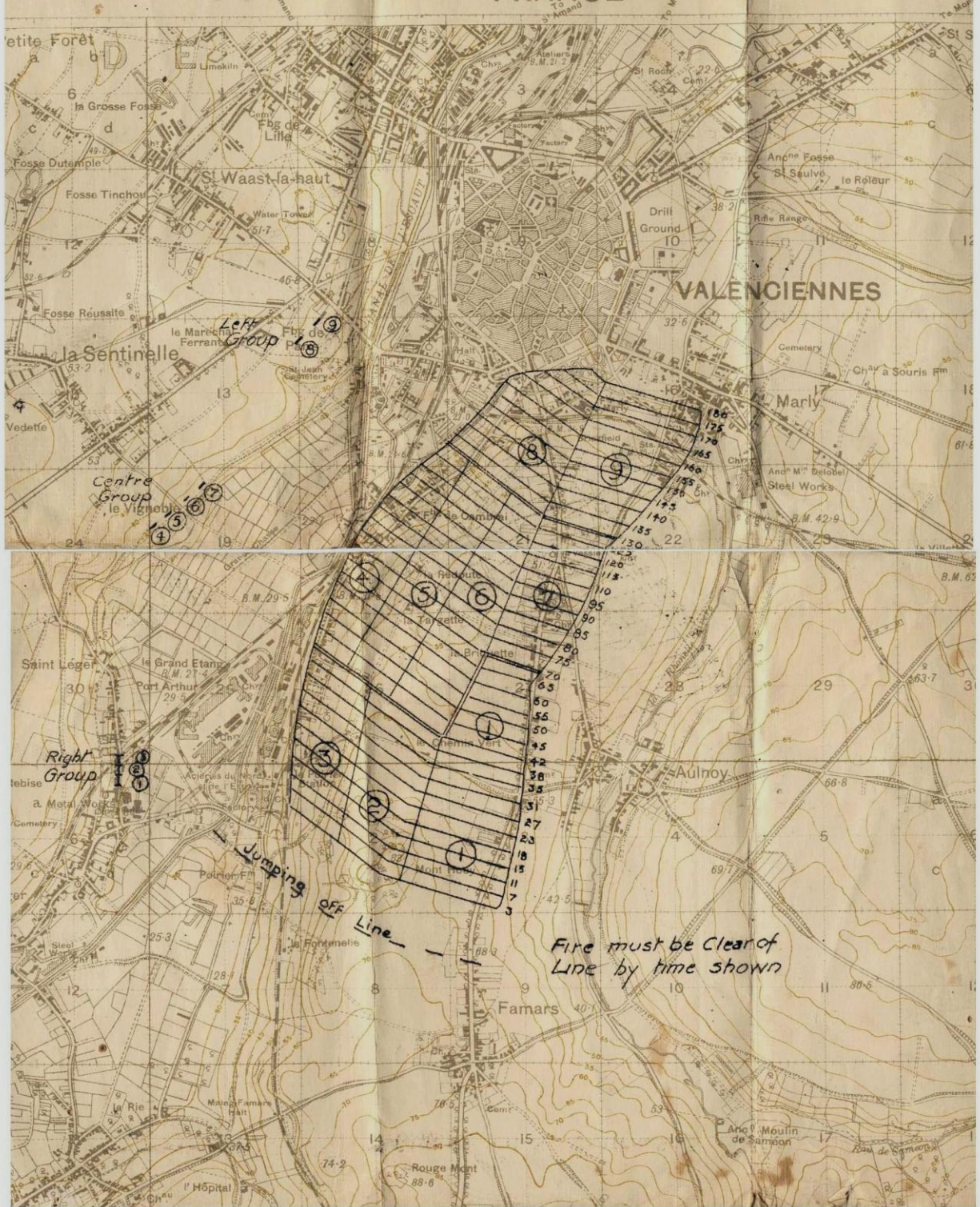
As the Infantry was to commence the attack at 5:15AM the Batteries had to carefully set up their guns in the dark being sure of the elevation and direction of their fire. The barrage started at the summit of Mont Houy and finished at the southern edge of Valenciennes. Great precision was needed to gradually advance the fire at specific intervals to protect the troops as they advanced at a set rate close behind the rain of artillery shells and

machine gun bullets, but the Canadian Artillery and Machine Gunners were experts at “Barrage Fire”.

The Germans were overwhelmed and Canadian Infantry took Mount Houy and Valenciennes very easily. The roads were impassable , now littered with destroyed German vehicles, dead men and horses impeding their ability to bring up men and supplies to fight off the Canadians. The Canadians were in no mood to take too many prisoners after seeing what hardships the Germans had inflicted on the poor French civilians. Although they did take 1800 German prisoners , the Germans suffered over 800 killed this day compared to less than 80 Canadians killed and less than 500 wounded.

Secret

MACHINE GUN BARRAGE MAP
FRANCE



The night of Nov.3rd/4th "C" Battery was placed in defensive positions to protect the 38th and 72nd Infantry Battalions , but the enemy fortunately did not attack.

By now rumours of an Armistice would be circulating but the enemy did not let up in fighting a brutal retreat. On Nov.5th "C" Battery in conjunction with "E" Battery were moving on foot in the early morning foggy mist through a cabbage patch when they came upon a German Machine Gun Crew about 25 yards away which immediately opened fire at them. At such close range the Motors returned fire using their pistols while setting up their machine guns. At this time the Commander of "C" Battery Lieut. W.A. Montgomery was killed , the German gunner was also killed and the rest of the German crew surrendered.

Again on Nov. 6th "C Battery" laid down a barrage to cover the 85th Canadian Infantry Battalion. In the short space of Oct. 28th to Nov. 6th the 1st CMMGB suffered 3 killed and 83 wounded. Surprisingly Harold's service record lists him as never being wounded , a very lucky man indeed.

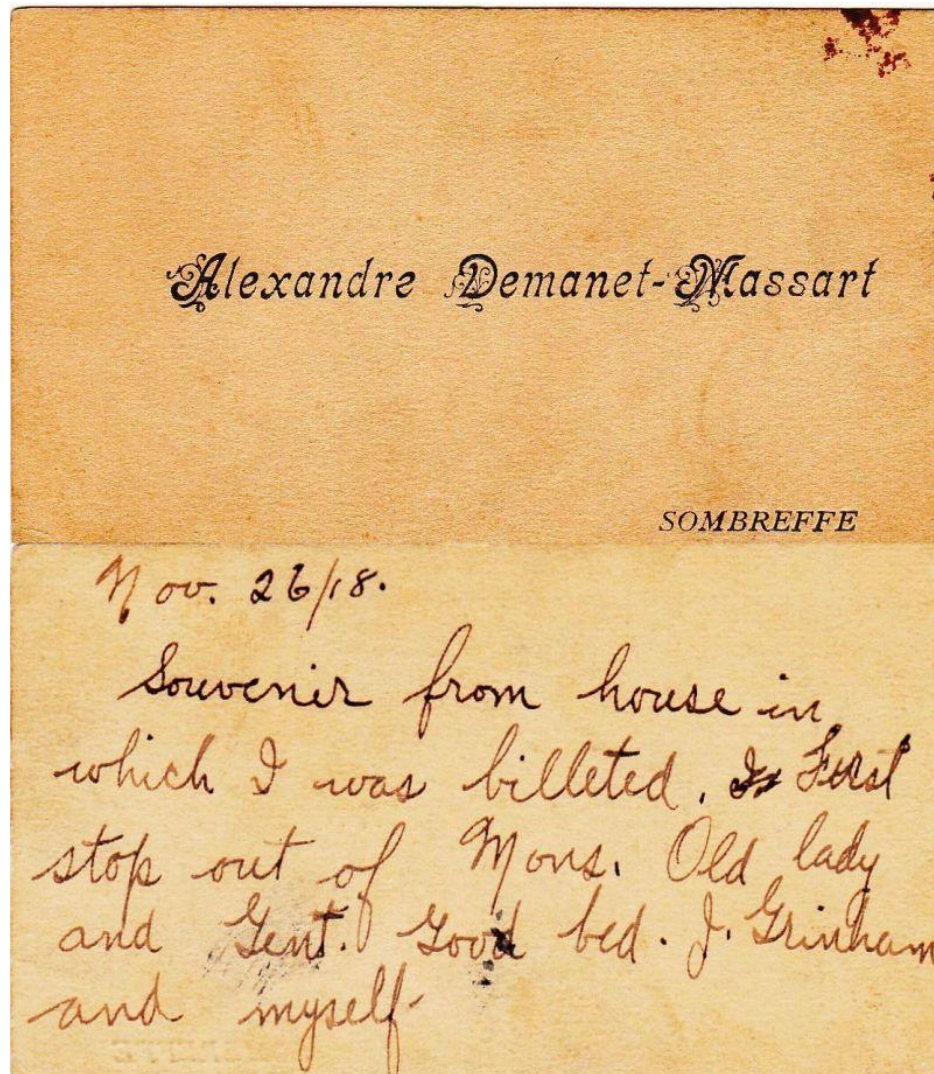
When the war ended at 11AM on November 11th they were in Mons Belgium and the Brigade proudly paraded through the town to the cheers of the local townspeople.

The Canadians were hailed as heroes , not just by the townspeople of Mons but also by the British, Mons is where the British were first defeated and driven out in the first days of the war in 1914. The war started and finished in Mons for the British Empire thanks to the CEF.



But this was not the end of duty yet , they were tasked with pushing the German Army back into Germany.

As they crossed Belgium towards Germany Harold saved a few souvenirs from the various places they billeted in.



James Grinham #799449 billeted with Harold.





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ENTRADA LIBRE PARA VISITAR LOS TALLERES

IMP. A. BERQUEMAN.

German Mauser- Gewehr Rifle Bullet Clip (less bullets)
one of his souvenirs .



Now they had to act as policemen as general unrest was prevalent with the German civilian population as well as with the defeated German Soldiers.

On Dec.13th while the 1st Canadian Division crossed the Rhine at Cologne and the 2nd Canadian Division was crossing the Rhine at Bonne being saluted by all the Generals in a huge ceremonial parade with flags flying and Brass and Pipe Bands playing the Motors were

absent. They had been tasked to go ahead to deal with bands of Bolsheviks who were pillaging and terrorizing the countryside.

Christmas Day 1918 in Friesdorf Germany General Brutinel would arrive to inspect his favourite troops , and Christmas dinner was served to all. Life was finally good for the men who fought hard every day and lived to tell.



Harold's seating place card for Christmas dinner.

Pte. Fowler "C" Bty

1st Motors Christmas Card.



First Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade.

THE SEASON'S GREETINGS

FROM

FRANCE.

Christmas, 1918.

New Year, 1919.

December 31st would see them posing for Brigade and Battery photos at Annaberg Castle , Friesdorf Germany just outside of Bonn. This castle still stands today as a First Class Hotel.

“C Battery” at Annaberg Castle Dec.31st 1918.

Harold is in back row 4th from the right still wearing his 455 pistol in this “C” Battery photo.



Inset of “C” Battery photo.



The full Brigade with MMG Transport Coy. and Machine Gun Corps Band Dec.31st 1918 Annaberg Castle Friesdorf.



During this Occupation Period the “Motors” being a Mobil Unit and top notch soldiers they were given the prestigious and proud duty of being the armed escort for the Commander of the Canadian Corps, General Sir Arthur Currie , quite a feather in the cap for a young man from the little farm town of Watford Ont.



Harold is standing in front of their Armoured Car 2nd from the right next to James Grinham on the right on the streets of Bonn Germany. Personal photos were not allowed in the field during the war , but this being the “Occupation Period” the men had these two photos taken to show family of their proud duty and good fortune.



Of the 8 original Armoured Cars only 4 survived the war , 2 from each Brigade. The only existing car today is a 1st Motors Car which is on display at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa , this was confirmed by F.F. Worthington who was in command of “E” Battery during the war , so there is a 50/50 chance this is the same Car that is in the two photos with Harold standing in front of.



In March 1919 they would return to England to prepare to be shipped home and Honourably Discharged , but first a Brigade Colours was made and to be presented to the Brigade in the city of Carlisle England.



The Brigades mascot proudly sits at Attention during the presentation ceremony.



The city of Carlisle bestowed this honour to the Brigade because the Brigades Commanding Officer Lt.-Col. W.K. Walker was born here. It was a proud day for the 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade , the whole town of Carlisle came out to watch the ceremony and to cheer the surviving Canadian Machine Gunners .

They would Parade the flag again upon going to Seaford just before sailing home to Canada.



Awaiting the arrival of their flag , Harold is 10th man down the line on March 30th 1919.

Artists rendition of the 1st Motors Colours.



It would be placed in the Christ Church Cathedral in Montreal upon returning to Canada but it now resides at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa .

On April 2nd some men , all members of “C” Battery the
“Bordens” posed for a post card with the Brigade mascot.

Harold is in the back row 3rd from the left.



From Seaford they took a train to Liverpool to sail for Canada on April 12th 1919 aboard the White Star Line's RMS Adriatic. They would arrive at Halifax on Easter Sunday April 20th and in Montreal on the 22nd. From there the men would get on trains and scatter across Canada to home and proud family.



S. S. ADRIATIC
KEEP THIS CARD No 124
You will occupy ONE BERTH
SECTION N ROOM
You will Mess at Table No. *53* in
DINING ROOM *Aft 2nd* Sitting
NOTE:- This card must be punched when a meal is served
(over) and no meal will be served without it.

You are assigned to { **BOAT**
RAFT _____
GENERAL SAFETY ORDERS
1. Never open any air port or opening in the Ship's side.
2. Do not tamper with any machinery, apparatus or Electric Lamps.
3. Smoking permitted on upper decks.
4. No smoking below decks at any time.
19357

Harold's Discharge Certificate.

CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE	
DISCHARGE CERTIFICATE	War Service Badge Class "A" No.
THIS IS TO CERTIFY that No. <u>844424</u> (Rank) <u>Private</u> .	
Name (in full) <u>Fowler, Harold, Barton</u>	enlisted in
the <u>149th Battalion</u>	
CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE at <u>Watford, Ont.</u> on the <u>28th</u> .	
day of <u>February</u>	19 <u>16</u> .
IN FRANCE	
HE served in <u>1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Battalion</u>	
and is now discharged from the service by reason of <u>Demobilization.</u> <u>Medical Unfitness.</u>	
THE DESCRIPTION OF THIS SOLDIER on the DATE below is as follows:	
Age <u>21</u>	Marks or Scars
Height <u>5' 9"</u>	<u>Scar right thigh 1914</u>
Complexion <u>Fresh</u>	
Eyes <u>Grey</u>	
Hair <u>Light Brown</u>	
<u>H.E. Fowler</u> Signature of Soldier	<u>H. Fisher</u> Issuing Officer
Date of Discharge	Rank <u>Private</u>
<u>APR 22 1919</u> Military District No. 4	Date <u>April 28</u> 19 <u>19</u>

N.B.—As no duplicate of this Certificate will be issued, any person finding same is requested to forward it in an unstamped envelope to the Secretary, Militia Council, Ottawa, Canada.

M.F.B. 39.
1049-D.P.-300M-11-13.
H.Q. 1772-39-882.

Once home Harold and Rosetta would soon be married and they would move to Sarnia where he would work at the Imperial Oil Refinery for the remainder of his life.



They would raise a family of five , Marion , Virginia , Harold Eston Jr. , Clarence and Rosemarie.

It would take the Canadian Government some time to make and send out all the medals to the men who served , but they did arrive at their home 525 Confederation St.

The medal on the left is the British War Medal , and the right one is the Victory Medal. On the rim of each medal is inscribed his service number , name , and the Unit he first went to France with , which was the 47th Battalion.



Canadian Machine Gun Corps Lapel Pin given to each member ,..... the Corps motto

Straight and True.



War Service Pin Class “A” to all Canadians who served at the Front in the First World War.

(As noted on Discharge Certificate)



The two above pins were not in Harold's effects , but were awarded to him.

Over 600,000 Canadians out of a population of only 8 million would go to war between 1914 and 1918 , 1 of 10 would not return. The Canadian Corps consisting of only 4 Divisions of Infantry plus Artillery and the Machine Gun Corps in the “Last 100 Days” of the war defeated 47 German Divisions about ¼ of the German Army.

Lest We Forget



